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12. The method, as set forth in claim 10, wherein receiving the search request message comprises receiving an XML search request message.

13. The method, as set forth in claim 10, wherein generating the search reply message comprises:

compiling a list of products and respective configuration data; and

5 providing a percentage value for each product in the list indicative of the degree of match between the product and the product configuration data contained in the search request message.

10 14. The method, as set forth in claim 10, wherein receiving the search request message comprises receiving a list of search criteria and a weighting of each criterion.

15 15. The method, as set forth in claim 10, further comprising:

receiving a search request document containing search criteria and converting to an XML document having a predetermined format; and

20 converting the XML document to an XML search request message.

16. The method, as set forth in claim 10, further comprising:

25 displaying product configuration information to the user on a web page;

receiving product configuration selection from the user; and

30 displaying a search result list of product substantially matching the product configuration and percentage matching data on a web page.

17. The method, as set forth in claim 10, further comprising:

importing in-process product availability data from an enterprise database.

18. The method, as set forth in claim 10, wherein generating the search reply message comprises:

10 incorporating product configuration data of each
substantially matching product; and

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21. The method, as set forth in claim 16, further comprising displaying an image of the product in response to receiving a user selection input.

1. The first step is to identify the problem. This involves understanding the current situation and the goals that need to be achieved.

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    sending the search reply message to the user.

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receiving the search request message on a
predetermined port;

searching the inventory database using the extracted vehicle configuration data.

27. The method, as set forth in claim 24, wherein generating the search reply message comprises:

providing a percentage value for each vehicle in the list indicative of the degree of match between the vehicle and the vehicle configuration data contained in the search request message.

29. The method, as set forth in claim 24, further comprising:

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receiving a search request document containing search criteria, and converting to an XML document having a predetermined format; and

5 converting the XML document to an XML search request message.

30. The method, as set forth in claim 24, further comprising:

10 displaying vehicle configuration information to the user on a web page;

receiving vehicle configuration selection from the user; and

15 displaying a search result list of vehicles substantially matching the vehicle configuration and percentage matching data on a web page.

31. The method, as set forth in claim 24, further comprising:

20 importing in-inventory vehicle availability data from dealerships;

importing in-process vehicle availability data from an enterprise database; and

25 updating the inventory database with the imported data.

32. The method, as set forth in claim 24, wherein generating the search reply message comprises:

30 incorporating a unique vehicle identifier of each substantially matching vehicle;

incorporating vehicle configuration data of each substantially matching vehicle; and

sorting the substantially matching vehicles by descending degree of match between the vehicle and the vehicle configuration data in the search request message.

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33. The method, as set forth in claim 24, further comprising:

receiving a tag request message submitted by the
5 user, the tag request message containing a unique vehicle identifier;

modifying the vehicle availability data associated
with the vehicle identified by the unique vehicle
identifier in the inventory database; and
10 generating a tag reply message confirming the
completion of tagging the identified vehicle.

34. The method, as set forth in claim 33, further
comprising suppressing the tagged vehicle from subsequent
15 search requests.

35. The method, as set forth in claim 30, further
comprising displaying a photographic image of the vehicle
in response to receiving a user selection input.

36. The method, as set forth in claim 30, further
comprising displaying detailed information associated
with a vehicle in response to receiving a user selection
input.

37. The method, as set forth in claim 30, further
comprising:

receiving a user selection input of a vehicle in the
list;

30 generating a search request message having an unique
vehicle identifier associated with the selected vehicle;

searching the inventory database for detailed data
associated with the unique vehicle identifier;

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    displaying vehicle configuration data;
    receiving user online input on vehicle
configuration, including make, model, and color of the
vehicle;

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        generating a search request message incorporating
the user-entered vehicle configuration;

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receiving a search reply message including a list of vehicles substantially matching the user-entered vehicle configuration; and

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39. The method, as set forth in claim 38, further comprising:

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        receiving an online user input selecting a vehicle
from the list of vehicles;

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generating a tag request message incorporating a unique vehicle identifier of the selected vehicle; and

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40. The method, as set forth in claim 38, wherein displaying the list comprises displaying the vehicles in

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receiving an online user input requesting detailed data on the selected vehicle;

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42. The method, as set forth in claim 41, further comprising:

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receiving a search reply message including a pointer to an image of the selected vehicle; and

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receiving a search reply message including a uniform resource locator to a web page containing an image of the selected vehicle; and

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displaying the web page specified by the uniform resource locator.

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